

Contrasting Tenses

What follows shows the differences between some tenses in the English language:

Simple Past vs. Present Perfect

When we have a definite adverb of time, we cannot use the present perfect tense. We should use the simple past tense instead.

Definite Adverbs of Time:

yesterday, two days ago, last week, five months ago, last year, in 1998, at 2 o'clock,

Don't Say: *I have bought a car in 2015.*

Say: *I bought a car in 2015.*

Don't Say: *I have eaten my lunch at 1 o'clock.*

Say: *I ate my lunch at 1 o'clock.*

When we have an indefinite adverb of time, we are allowed to use the present perfect tense.

Indefinite Adverbs of Time:

recently, lately, until now, so far, already, yet,

Examples:

The Browns have recently bought a new house.

He has already eaten his lunch.

Point:

In British English, we use the adverb "just" with the present perfect tense and we don't use it with the simple past tense. But in American English, it can be used with both of them.

just = very recently, not long ago

Examples:

We have just started the class. ⇒ **American & British**

We just started the class. ⇒ **American**

The Jacksons have just moved to a new house. ⇒ **American & British**

The Jacksons just moved to a new house. ⇒ **American**

Simple Past vs. The Past Perfect Tense

We use the past perfect tense to talk about an action which happened before another action or a particular time in the past.

We can't use the past perfect tense for an action which happened after another action in the past.

We can always use the simple past tense instead of the past perfect tense, but the reverse is not always possible.

the reverse = the opposite action

Don't Say: Mr. Sullivan **packed** his suitcase before he **had gone** on a trip.

Say: Mr. Sullivan **had packed** his suitcase before he **went** on a trip.

Say: Mr. Sullivan **packed** his suitcase before he **went** on a trip.

Say: After Mr. Sullivan **had packed** his suitcase, he **went** on a trip.

Don't Say: After I **brushed** my teeth, I **had gone** to bed.

Say: After I **had brushed** my teeth, I **went** to bed.

Say: After I **brushed** my teeth, I **went** to bed.

Say: I **had brushed** my teeth before I **went** to bed.

Present Perfect Simple vs. Present Perfect Progressive

We can use the present perfect simple tense to talk about an action which finished in the past, but we use the present perfect progressive to talk about an action which was not finished in the past and is still in progress.

I have studied my lessons. ⇒ **Finished Action**

I have been studying my lessons. ⇒ **Unfinished Action** ⇒ I am still studying.

The engineers in our company have assembled a new robot. ⇒ **Finished Action**

The engineers in our company have been assembling a new robot. ⇒ **Unfinished Action** ⇒ They are still working on it.

Point:

The above-mentioned difference exists when we use the present perfect simple to talk about an experience in the past and we don't use "since" or "for".

Example:

The following sentences have more or less the same meaning:

I have lived in Los Angeles since 2001.

I have been living in Los Angeles since 2001.

Stative Verbs vs. Dynamic Verbs

Stative verbs and **dynamic verbs** are two types of verbs that differ in their function and the kind of actions or states they describe.

Stative Verbs:

Definition: Stative verbs describe a state or condition rather than an action. These verbs are often related to thoughts, emotions, relationships, senses, states of being, and measurements.

Characteristics: They do not usually take continuous tenses (i.e., they are not typically used in the present continuous or past continuous forms).

Examples:

Thoughts/Beliefs: know, believe, understand

Example: "I believe in hard work."

Emotions: love, hate, prefer

Example: "She loves chocolate."

Possession: have, own, possess

Example: "They have a new car."

Senses: see, hear, smell

Example: "I see the mountains."

Dynamic Verbs:

Definition: Dynamic verbs describe actions or processes that can change over time. These verbs typically involve activities or events.

Characteristics: They can be used in continuous tenses, reflecting ongoing or repeated actions.

Examples:

Physical Actions: run, jump, write

Example: "She is running in the park."

Processes: grow, develop, change

Example: "The plant is growing quickly."

Activities: play, dance, eat

Example: "They are eating dinner."

Comparison:

Stative Verb: "I know the answer."

Describes a state of knowledge.

Dynamic Verb: "I am learning the answer."

Describes the process of acquiring knowledge.

Understanding the difference between these verbs helps in using the correct tense and conveying the appropriate meaning.

Appendix 4 at the end of the student's book includes a comprehensive list of stative verbs:

| APPEARANCE | EMOTIONS | MENTAL STATES | PERCEPTION AND THE SENSES | POSSESSION | WANTS AND PREFERENCES | Other |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| appear be concern indicate look mean (= signify) parallel represent resemble seem signify (= mean) | abhor admire adore appreciate care desire detest dislike doubt empathize envy fear hate hope like love regret respect sympathize trust | agree amaze amuse annoy assume astonish believe bore care consider deem deny disagree disbelieve entertain(=amuse) estimate expect fancy favor feel(=believe) figure(=assume) find guess hesitate hope imagine imply impress infer know mean mind presume realize recognize recollect remember revere see(=understand) suit suppose suspect think(=believe) tire understand wonder | ache feel hear hurt notice observe perceive see sense smart smell taste | belong contain have own pertain possess | desire need prefer want wish | cost include lack matter owe refuse suffice |

Point:

As a verb, "smart" means to feel a sharp, stinging pain, either physically or emotionally. It can describe a sudden, acute sensation of pain or discomfort.

Examples:

Physical Pain: "Her eyes smarted from the smoke."

Emotional Pain: "He smarted from the harsh criticism."

It's less commonly used as a verb compared to its adjectival form, but it still effectively conveys the idea of experiencing a brief, intense pain.

Point:

As a verb, "parallel" means to be similar to or to correspond closely with something else, showing a resemblance in some aspect.

Examples:

"Her career path parallels her father's, both of them becoming doctors."

"The new policy parallels the old one in many respects."

Point:

Some verbs are sometimes dynamic and sometimes stative depending on the meaning.

Examples:

I am having lunch. ⇒ **Dynamic Verb** ⇒ have: eat or drink

Are you having a good time? ⇒ **Dynamic Verb** ⇒ have: experience

I have a beautiful big house. ⇒ **Stative Verb** ⇒ have: own, possess

I am looking at the cat on top of the wall. ⇒ **Dynamic Verb** ⇒ look: observe

You look tired today. ⇒ **Stative Verb** ⇒ look: seem

He is being obvious today. ⇒ **Dynamic Verb** ⇒ be: behave

The book is on the desk. ⇒ **Stative Verb** ⇒ be: exist

Sequence of Tenses

The sequence of tenses refers to the logical relationship and consistency of verb tenses within a sentence or across connected sentences. This rule ensures that the tenses used in various parts of a sentence correspond with each other appropriately, maintaining clarity and coherence in the timeline of actions or events.

Key Points:

Primary Sequence: When the main verb in the independent clause is in the present or future tense, the verb in the dependent clause will typically be in the present or future tense.

Example:

"She says (present) that she is going (present) to the party."

Secondary Sequence: When the main verb in the independent clause is in the past tense, the verb in the dependent clause will usually be in a past tense form as well.

Example:

"She said (past) that she was going (past) to the party."

Other Examples:

Present + Present:

"I think (present) she knows (present) the answer."

Past + Past:

"He believed (past) that they had already left (past perfect)."

Present + Future:

"She hopes (present) that he will call (future)."

Past + Future in the Past:

"Jack gave us his word that he would do his best on the final exam."

Past + Past Continuous:

"They knew (past) that she was studying (past continuous)."

Maintaining a proper sequence of tenses helps in conveying the intended meaning accurately and avoiding confusion about the timing of events.

Source:

[High Intermediate 1 \(anglophone.ir\)](http://anglophone.ir)